Foreword

With pastor following pastor, each one trying to keep alive the spark of Faith in the hearts of his parishioners, a kaleidoscopic procession in this souvenir booklet depicts the ancient Church in Baton Rouge. Although they differed in name, they all had been assigned to cultivate the same spiritual soil. There seems to be a kindred between the soil of the earth and the soil of the heart.

In the one, climatic conditions are responsible for the ups and downs of the tiller, whilst in the other, the tiller is confronted by the ups and down in the heart of man. In both fields may be found periods of progress and periods of retrogression, with Hope fulfilled or dashed to pieces; with prosperity in the offing or failure just around the corner; with good days; with bad days; with days full of mediocrity.

Such has been the woof and warp in the tapestry which the 150th birthday of St. Joseph’s Parish presents on this date. There have been ups and downs that may be summed up in the words of the poet:

Though skies be low’ring, darkly grey,
And hurricanes sweep o’er the land,
Whilst HATE unchain’d holds LOVE at bay
With human wit the loving hand—

Should we despair? No, let me say
This book succinctly points the way;
That storms, though ‘lent, pass away;
With LOVE INCARNATE holding sway.

Go—scan each page, and there you’ll see
That, after storms, the sky’s serene.—
From hundred fifty years we glean
That ups and downs must ever be.

Trinity Sunday, 1943

FRANCIS LEON GASSLER, Rector
St. Joseph—Our Patron Saint

His Holiness Pope Pius XII—262nd Successor of St. Peter
Most Reverend Joseph Francis Rummel, S.T.D.
Ninth Archbishop of New Orleans

Right Reverend Monsignor Francis Leon Gassler, V.F.
Jubilarian—1893–1943
Right Rev. Monsignor Francis L. Gassler, V.F.
423 Main Street
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

DEAR MONSIGNOR GASSLER:

Permit me to extend to you and to all the members of your congregation a very cordial greeting on the occasion of the One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the founding of St. Joseph's Parish in Baton Rouge. The circumstances that this Sesquicentennial observance coincides with the One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the erection of the Diocese of New Orleans is very noteworthy, because it indicates the important place Baton Rouge and St. Joseph's congregation hold in the history of the Archdiocese.

Any institution or establishment which can boast of one hundred and fifty years of continued and progressive existence has every right to rejoice, but a Catholic congregation which has withstood the impacts of wars, inundations and epidemics of disease through so many generations, never failing to carry on with fidelity and courage its spiritual mission may indeed review with pride as well as gratitude its achievement.

St. Joseph's Church in Baton Rouge arose from the Banks of the Mississippi River in those dawning years when the Louisiana Colony was about to pass from Spanish dominion to French rule, destined ultimately to be integrated into the United States of America, when the latter had not yet reached the first quarter century of complete independence. Thus we may refer to the early years of this now venerable congregation as years of genuine pioneering, accompanied by all the uncertainties and sacrifices of a new venture.

God's blessing was manifestly with the pioneer priests and the faithful, when St. Joseph's Church came into being, for notwithstanding many controversies and discussions, the congregation grew in vigor and strength, becoming one of the outstanding religious groups in Louisiana. This is not surprising when we find among the Pastors an unusual array of churchmen destined in the providence of God to be advanced to the episcopal rank. We refer to Father Antoine Blanc, who became the fourth Bishop and the first Archbishop of New Orleans; Father Cornelius Van De Ven, who was elevated to the See of Natchitoches-Alexandria; Father Jean Marius Laval, who for many years functioned as Auxiliary Bishop of New Orleans, and Father Arthur Drossart, who became Bishop of San Antonio and rose with his See to the rank of a Metropolitan. The zeal, the industry and the courage of most of the other Pastors who presided over the spiritual and material welfare of St. Joseph's congregation were equal to the difficulties which from time to time menaced the peace and even the stability of this work of God.

Today St. Joseph's congregation can look with pride to one of the most beautiful churches in the Archdiocese, a magnificent and highly efficient high school, the beautiful new high school for girls built by the devoted Sisters of St. Joseph as well as a successful grade school development. The mother church of Baton Rouge can look also with pride to her spiritual daughters, namely the congregations which the growth of Baton Rouge in population and civic importance made necessary. The Capital City of Louisiana today presents one of the best organized Catholic centers within the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

It is not without significance that you, my dear Monsignor Gassler, who have devoted more than twenty years of your priesthood to the pastoral administration of St. Joseph's congregation, are privileged to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of your Ordination to the Holy Priesthood. During the score of years that you have been Pastor of this congregation you have advanced in a singular manner its spiritual, educational and civic prestige, while you have risen constantly in the esteem, the reverence and the affection of the members of your devoted flock and of your fellow citizens of every creed and race. In very truth Baton Rouge looks up to you as to a father, friend and prudent counsellor.

Hence, it is with great delight that I extend to you and to the members of your congregation my most cordial felicitations on the double Jubilee celebration which you are observing. As we thank Almighty God for the manifold blessings which the venerable mother church of Baton Rouge has enjoyed during these one hundred and fifty years, and for the rich fruits that have resulted from your priestly ministry in the several parishes committed to your care during the half century of your sacerdotal life, we pray that an abundance of heavenly graces may descend upon Shepherd and flock, so that this Jubilee may usher in a new epoch of joint effort and successful achievement for God's glory and for the welfare of souls.

Faithfully yours in the Lord,

*Jos. F. RUMMEL
Archbishop of New Orleans
222 YEARS
OF CATHOLICISM

FIRST MASS: Mass was first celebrated in Baton Rouge on New Year's Day, 1722, by the renowned Jesuit Father, Francis Xavier de Charlevoix. The event took place in Monsieur Dirion d'Artaguette's plantation home, on the shores of what is now known as University Lake, in the shadow of Louisiana's towering State Capitol.

MISSIONARY OUTPOST: Prior to 1792 Baton Rouge was served by Irish missionary priests attached to the Church of San Salvador, in Natchez.

FIRST CHURCH: The first church was known as Our Lady of Sorrows, or the Church of the Virgin of Sorrows. It was built about 1789 when the colony was under Spanish rule.

ANTONIO DE GRAS: He laid out a portion of the City of Baton Rouge, and donated the land for the church site.

CARLOS BURKE (1792-1799): The first resident pastor was an Irish monk educated in Spain and sent by the Spanish Crown to Louisiana because of his knowledge of English. His first canonical entry on parish records was on January 15, 1793, when he married Antonio de Gras and Genevieve Dulat. The first baptism was performed on October 24, 1793. His last entry was on July 28, 1799. Father Burke died of yellow fever.

FRANCIS LENNAN (1800-1802): Like Father Burke, he was educated in Spain and was a member of the Order of Francisian Capuchin Fathers. He served about two years. After his departure there followed a period of about a year when there was no resident pastor. Father Patrick Lonergan and Father Paul St. Pierre served as acting pastors.

JOHN BRADY (1803-1822): Father Brady arrived in Baton Rouge on May 10, 1803 and for sixteen of his nineteen years here, signed himself Cura Interius (temporary pastor). Finances were a serious problem at that time. The Board of Wardens, 1818, was composed of John de Bellieuve, J. Bt. Maillard, Manuel Lopez and Fergus Duplantier. Father Brady "sold his church" to the trustees on December 1, 1821, for $600, an unusual event in church history.

DESMOULINS (1822-1826): Father Desmoulins assumed pastorate in August, 1822. He brought Mother Duchesne, whose cause for canonization is now pending before the Holy See, to Grand Coteau. The Board of Trustees, 1823, consisted of A. Duplantier, John de Bellieuve, Philip Hickey, John Kleinpeter, Sr., and B. T. Beauregard. St. Joseph Cemetery opened in 1824.

ANTOINE BLANC (1826-1832): Father Blanc became pastor on January 23, 1826. Parish records and financial affairs were rehabilitated. He built St. John's Chapel at the Plains, which was dedicated on January 30, 1827. He built the second church, which was renamed St. Joseph and dedicated on December 19, 1830, by Bishop Leo Francis de Neckere of New Orleans. Father Blanc later became the fourth Bishop and first Archbishop of New Orleans.

HERCULE BRASSAC (1832-1833): He was pastor from March, 1832, to August, 1833. He left for Europe after having made a tour of Louisiana. Twenty years later he achieved international distinction as an accredited diplomat to Francis the First at the Imperial Court of Austria. Father J. F. Brasseur replaced him for a few months.

PETER FRANCIS BEAUPREZ (1834-1838): Appointed pastor on March 23, 1834. A steeple was built and a bell installed on the second church. This caused considerable financial difficulties in the ensuing years.

ST. JOSEPH'S—NURSERY OR BISHOPS:
Top—Jean Marius Laval (Pastor 1894-1905)—Second Auxiliary Bishop of New Orleans.
Center—Cornelius Van de Ven (Pastor 1902-1904)—Fourth Bishop of Natchitoches and First Bishop of Alexandria.
Not Pictured—Antoine Blanc (Pastor 1826-1832)—Fourth Bishop and First Archbishop of New Orleans, and Augustin Martin (Pastor 1847-1849)—First Bishop of Natchitoches.
JOHANNES EVRARD (1838-1841): He was the “stormy petrel” of the wardens, who condemned him for refusing Christian burial to an unrepentant renegade Catholic. They seized his furniture. He fled across the river and found refuge at Brusly Landing. Vindicated by parishioners in March, 1842, when wardens were voted out of office by outraged parishioners.

J. N. BROGARD (1841-1846): Became pastor in December, 1841. The wardens objected to his preaching three Sundays in English and only one Sunday in French. They cut his salary. Board of Wardens sued by the painter, Wasmouth, for a painting supposed to represent the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. The wardens harassed Father Brogard at every step, in imitation of the Marguilliers who were revolting against Bishop Blanc in New Orleans. Lay meddling was finally abolished in 1844 when priest-hating wardens were forced to resign by Bishop Blanc, Father Brogard, and a new Board of Wardens headed by layman L. L. Burke. A new set of stations were erected on November 4, 1844.

AUGUST MARTIN (1847-1849): A real missionary spirit. Greatly improved spiritual status and financial affairs of the parish. Sisters of Charity attempted foundation in Baton Rouge. United States government placed markers around old graveyard (present Catholic High School campus), claiming the property as part of the public domain. Bodies removed to new St. Joseph Cemetery. First mission preached in 1848 by the Jesuit Father Marimonty, “Pastor’s Den.” now officially known as St. Margaret’s Hall—and still as sound as ever, bought from Peter McInturff by Father Martin and presented to the church. Board of Wardens composed of Philip Hickey, H. V. Babin, C. A. Choppin, A. Theriot and Peter McInturff. Father Martin was consecrated the first Bishop of the new Diocese of Natchitoches.

SOCIETY OF JESUS (1850-1865): Father Hyppolite Gache, S. J. (1850-1851), first Jesuit pastor. The Jesuit College of Saints Peter and Paul started and operated (1850-1856) with much opposition from bigoted element in city. Religious of Sacred Heart attempted foundation of a school for girls in 1850. Church completely lifted out of debt on June 30, 1851. Third church was built in 1853-1856. Church property was mortgaged in 1855 and notes bought by Abraham Bird for $5,550. Wardens broke agreement with Bird on June 23, 1856. Christian Brothers expelled and property confiscated in August, 1862, by victorious Federal troops after Battle of Baton Rouge. Other Jesuit pastors were Anthony Parrett, S. J. (1851-1853); Joseph Lavay, S. J. (1853-1858); Darius Hubert, S. J. (1858-1861); and Frederick Larnaudie, S. J. (1861-1865). Three died of yellow fever, and two from old age. Three served as army chaplains during the Civil War. Two yellow fever epidemics and the Civil War proved to be too much for the Jesuit Fathers in Baton Rouge.

CYRIL DELACROIX (1865-1893): Secular clergy again took charge of the parish, with the appointment of Father Delacroix on December 27, 1865. Prior to his coming to America, Father Delacroix was known as Count de La Croix. He dropped his title of nobility to devote his life to the ministries of souls in Louisiana. He tided St. Joseph’s through the Reconstruction period. St. Joseph Academy for girls and small boys, and an orphanage for girls, were opened by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Bourg in 1868. The sanctuary and “Grotto of Lourdes” built in St. Joseph’s. Louisiana’s most beautiful steeple built over St. Joseph’s in December, 1891. Church property seized in payment of debts by William S. Pike on August 8, 1875, and bought back by Pike at a sheriff’s sale on September 8, 1875 for $6,850. Church seized again on July 5, 1884, by Frederick Eyle to whom Pike heirs had sold the notes. The church was sold again at a Sheriff’s sale and bought by Eyle for his own account for $12,000. Locked out of their church, parishioners organized the Catholic Society of East Baton Rouge on July 15, 1884, for the purpose of re-obtaining the church. The legal counsel of Edward Douglas White, who later became Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, was sought. His opinion on the mortgage and foreclosure was contrary to the hopes of the parishioners, but who now fully resolved to pay the debt, reached an agreement with Eyle to settle for $10,000. The last installment of $2,500 was paid on May 18, 1889. The Old graveyard property obtained from the United States government in 1891. Father Delacroix is the only one whose pastorate extended beyond the quarter century mark. He died on December 7, 1893, and his remains rest in the aisle on the gospel side of St. Joseph’s.

JEAN MARIUS LAVAL (1894-1895): Appointed pastor January 11, 1894. Warmly received by the congregation because he was the hero-priest of the yellow fever epidemic

+ Very Reverend Cyril Delacroix—Pastor 1865-1893
+ Top—Reverend A. Van der Heyde—Pastor 1895-1899
Center—Reverend James P. Malone—Pastor 1899-1902
Bottom—Reverend Joseph F. Celignac—Pastor 1904-1919
of 1878. Restored order to the muddled affairs of the parish. Brothers of Sacred Heart opened school for boys in September, 1894. It was named St. Vincent Academy in honor of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul which was instrumental in obtaining the old graveyard from the United States government. Stained glass windows installed in the sanctuary. Father Laval was consecrated the second Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

A. VAN DER HEYDE (1895-1899): Became pastor in September, 1895. Built new rectory, had church cemented, constructed iron fence around cemetery, and installed new altars. Remarkable achievements in the financial administration and improvements of the parish were made by Father Van Der Heyde during his short stay.


JOSEPH F. SOLIGNAC (1904-1910): Baton Rouge Council No. 969, Knights of Columbus, organized on January 22, 1905, with L. Paul Amis as the first grand knight. Court Marie Louise No. 60, Catholic Daughters of America, organized on January 27, 1907, with Mrs. D. R. Barfield as the first grand regent. Enlarged St. Joseph Cemetery. Father Solignac resigned on August 10, 1910.


NURSERY OF BISHOPS: St. Joseph's is so-called because she furnished the fourth Bishop and first Archbishop of New Orleans, Antoine Blanc; the first and fourth Bishops of Natchitoches (now Alexandria), August Martin and Cornelius Van de Ven; the second Auxiliary Bishop of New Orleans, Jean Marius Laval; and the fifth Bishop and first Archbishop of San Antonio, Arthur Drossaerts.


FRANCIS LEON GASSLER (1921-1939): Appointed pastor on January 15, 1921. Most progressive era in history of St. Joseph's. Part of Roselawn Memorial Park allocated for burial of Catholics. Rebuilt church at a cost of $207,000, which was solemnly dedicated on January 20, 1924. Our Lady of the Lake Hospital constructed at a cost of $900,000 and turned over to the Franciscan Sisters of Calais on November 7, 1923. Sacred Heart Chapel built in 1925 and erected as a separate parish four years later. Louisiana State University Catholic Student Center fostered in 1929. St. Vincent's Academy replaced by Catholic High School at a cost of $265,000. The old Catholic Women's Club purchased to take care of the overflow from Catholic High School and for use as St. Joseph Parochial School, in charge of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Hogue property bought for eventual building of parish hall. Sesquicentennial of church, and golden sacerdotal jubilee of Pastor celebrated on May 23 and June 20-21, 1945.

(Excerpts from Montignor Gassler's "History of St. Joseph's Church," Hope Haven Press, $1.00.)
CHILDREN'S DAY
MAY 23, 1943

JUBILEE MASS OF THANKSGIVING—8:30 A.M.
ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH
RIGHT REVEREND FRANCIS LEON GASSLER, V.F., CELEBRANT

PANORAMA—8:00 P.M.
CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

STAR-SPANGLED BANNER ................................ Assembly
PROLOGUE:
SEMINARY .................................................. St. Anthony Parochial School
IOTA ........................................................... St. Agnes Parochial School
MEMORIES ................................................... St. Joseph Academy Chorus
NEW ORLEANS .............................................. Sacred Heart Parochial School
BATON ROUGE ............................................. St. Joseph Parochial School
SELECTION ................................................. Catholic High School Band

Catholic Student Center, Louisiana State University

EPILLOGUE:
OUR BELOVED JUBILARIAN ................ Catholic High School—St. Joseph Academy
GOD BLESS AMERICA .......................... Assembly

MUSICAL INTERLUDES BY THE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL BAND
UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MR. H. T. LANDRY
ST. JOSEPH ACADEMY CHORUS
UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MRS. J. CLIFTON HILL
MISS ROSALIE CANGELOSI, ACCOMPANIST
MR. ED OLIVER ROY, STAGE MANAGER

This program was rendered before the closing of the 1942-43 school session to enable the students of the various schools in the city to prepare and present a dramatization of the Jubilarian's life. A great concourse of children, as well as friends and parishioners, assisted at the Jubilee Mass and attended the highly successful panorama.

Bringing Man to God

Because his is the sacred privilege of spending himself ministering within the inner realms of the many souls committed to his care, bringing God to man and man to God, no one in this world can ever know the entirety of the good that is accomplished during the lifetime of a Catholic priest. No one but the Eternal Lover of souls can know the far reaching consequences of a priest's influence—consequences that weave and interweave through many lives and that will live on into endless eternity. That is one reason why the Golden Sacerdotal Jubilee of a Catholic priest is an occasion of unspeakable joy.

On June 21, 1893 Holy Mother Church welcomed Francis Leon Gassler into the consecrated ranks of the Royal Priesthood of Jesus Christ. In this year of 1943 we pause to pay personal tribute to this priest and man of God who has given fifty years of his fruitful life to zealous service of the Master. To know Monsignor Gassler is to know one of the outstanding sacerdotal pioneers of Louisiana and a counsellor of unusual judgment and foresight.

Prominent among his priestly virtues there has always been his characteristic ardent love of little ones which has endeared him to every child that has ever felt the influence of his fatherly concern and love. That alone warrants more honor and affection than we can possibly offer him on this happy occasion.

All who know Monsignor Gassler love him for what he has been and for what he is today—a true priest and man of God.

Hosts of friends, among the clergy and lay people, have patiently awaited this milestone in his remarkable life. As he again ascends the altar of God to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass after fifty golden years, we rejoice with him and pray that the Most High will shower upon him the choicest of heavenly favors.

(John J. Naughton)
RELIGIOUS DAY
JUNE 20, 1943

SOLEMN JUBILEE MASS OF THANKSGIVING
CORAM EPISCOPO—11:30 A.M.
ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH

RIGHT REVEREND FRANCIS LEON GASSELR, V.F. .......... Celebrant
REVEREND THOMAS COLBERT ................................ Deacon
REVEREND DOMINIC BLASCO ................................ Subdeacon
REVEREND ABEIL CALILOUT .................................. Master of Ceremonies
REVEREND CARL SCHUTTEN .................................. Chaplains to the Archbishop
REVEREND EDWARD C. PRENDERGAST . Master of Ceremonies to the Archbishop

SERMON
MOST REVEREND JOSEPH FRANCIS RUMMEL, S.T.D.
ARCHBISHOP OF NEW ORLEANS

ORDER OF MUSIC
MOTTO: "...Let us sing to the Lord, for He is gloriously magnified..."
—Exodus 15:1

PROCESSIONAL: ECCE SACERDOS ................................. Stadler
PROPER OF MASS .................................................. Rossini
ORDINARY OF MASS: MASS IN C .................................. Gounod—Mary
OFFERTORY INSERT: PANIS ANGELICUS ......................... Franch—Davis
TE DEUM ............................................................. Vatican Graduale

RECESSINAL: HOLY GOD, WE PRAISE THY NAME
ST. JOSEPH'S ALL-MALE CHOIR
MISS ROSALIE CANGELosi, Organist
REV. JOHN J. NAUGHTON, Director

CLERGY LUNCHEON—1:30 P.M.
HEIDELBERG HOTEL
VOCAL SELECTIONS
MISS CECILIA SIMON, Mr. DURWARD BABIN
MRS. J. CLIFTON HILL

INSTRUMENTALISTS
MRS. L. E. WELCH, Cellist
MRS. B. F. ANDERSON, Violinist

ACCOMPANIST
MISS ROSALIE CANGELosi, Pianist

CIVIC DAY
JUNE 21, 1943

SOLEMN NEWM MASS—7:00 A.M.
FOR THE DECEASED CLERGY AND FAITHFUL OF ST. JOSEPH PARISH

RIGHT REVEREND FRANCIS LEON GASSELR, V.F. .......... Celebrant
REVEREND MAURICE SCHENNYBER ................................ Deacon
REVEREND PATRICK GILLESPIE ................................ Subdeacon
REVEREND LESTER J. SCHENNYBER ............................ Master of Ceremonies
MISSA PRO DEFUNCTIS .......................................... Vatican Graduale

ST. JOSEPH'S ALL-MALE CHOIR
MISS ROSALIE CANGELosi, Organist
REV. JOHN J. NAUGHTON, Director

CIVIC RECEPTION—8:00 P.M.
CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

GOD BLESS AMERICA .............................................. Assembly
MASTER OF CEREMONIES ......................................... Mr. John B. Heroman
STATE OF LOUISIANA .............................................. Mr. Hale Boggs
VOCAL SOLO ......................................................... Miss Mary Catherine McGrew
CITY OF BATON ROUGE .......................................... Honorable Fred S. LeBlanc, Mayor
VOCAL SOLO ......................................................... Mr. Durward Babin

TABLEAU: OUR PATRON ST. JOSEPH
VOCAL DUET ......................................................... Mrs. J. Clifton Hill, Mr. Durward Babin

CATHOLIC LAYMEN ............................................... Mr. Andrew F. Bahlinger

COMMUNITY SINGING
CATHOLIC LAYWOMEN ............................................ Mrs. A. B. Booth
VOCAL SOLO ......................................................... Miss Katherine Landry

PRESENTATION: OUR BELOVED JUBILARIAN
STAR-SPANGLED BANNER ......................................... Assembly

CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL BAND
UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MR. H. T. LANDRY
ACCOMPANISTS
MRS. L. E. WELCH, Cellist
MRS. B. F. ANDERSON, Violinist
MISS ROSALIE CANGELosi, Pianist
The six windows shown here are taken from a group of twelve stained glass windows from the studios of Emil Frei & Son, St. Louis, and installed thirty years ago by Father Arthur Drossaerts, who in 1911, died as the first Archbishop of San Antonio. From left to right the pictures depict:

†

THE WEDDING CEREMONY between Mary and Joseph. Theirs was a true, legal, and valid marriage although both had made the vow of perpetual virginity. Fortified by a special grace, they mutually renounced their marriage rights.

†

THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD. This glorious event, celebrated at Christmas tide, is also the subject of the third joyful mystery.

†

THE PRESENTATION of the Child Jesus in the Temple at Jerusalem when He was forty days old. It is coincident with the legal purification of the Blessed Mother, who being sinless, was not bound by that law.

†

FLIGHT INTO EGYPT. Herod having determined to kill all the new-born male children in and around Bethlehem, the Angel warned St. Joseph to take the Child and His Mother and flee into Egypt for the duration.

†

NAZARETH. The Holy Family presents a most timely subject in our days when so many homes are broken up by divorce and loose living.

†

THE BAPTISM. This wonderful picture of the Baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan, makes us almost hear the Words spoken by the Heavenly Father: "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him."
FATHER GASSLER ~ JUBILARIAN

Leon Robert Gasser was born on December 19, 1861 at Lucerne, Switzerland, the twelfth child of Xavier Gasser and Anna Stopher. At the age of eighteen he became a member of the Third Order of St. Francis and at that time adopted the name of Francis.

After attending the elementary and secondary schools of Lucerne, he pursued his classical studies in the College of Mount Engelberg, Switzerland, where he finished with a Bachelor of Arts. He then studied philosophy at the University of Innsbruck, Austria, and theology at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland.

Originally intended for work in his native Diocese of St. Gall in Switzerland, the studious young man was selected by his Bishop for extra-curricular work to prepare him for the position of Diocesan Superintendent of Education. That entailed an incredible amount of study and hard work.

HEALTH FAILED

The young Gasser studied very diligently, but his indomitable courage had serious consequences. Having never been ill before, he failed to realize the limits of human endurance, and in 1890 his health broke. Physicians finally reached the conclusion that the young seminarian must either have a change of climate or abandon his vocation to the Priesthood. They told him he would never be able to stand the rigors of the severe Swiss winters, and counselled him to seek a warmer climate.

ORDAINED IN 1893

On June 21, 1893, Archbishop William Henry Elder of Cincinnati ordained him to the Holy Priesthood, and Father Gasser immediately set out for Louisiana, reaching New Orleans on June 29. The day was an extremely hot one, but due to the enfeebled condition of the young priest, he never felt the heat. His physical appearance alarmed Archbishop Janssens to such an extent when Father Gasser reported to him, that he summoned his personal physician at